



# Introduction

*Sarah Davis-Secord, Belen Vicens, and Robin Vose*

Olivia Remie Constable was a towering figure in the fields of interfaith relations and cross-cultural exchange in medieval Iberia and the Mediterranean world. Yet because her scholarly career was cut short by her untimely death, many conversations about her research were left unspoken. This collection of essays therefore represents the efforts of many people, working both individually and in concert over several years, to pay homage to our late colleague and her scholarship. Our goal was to assemble a volume of essays both in memory of and in conversation with Remie's scholarship—which often highlighted the complexity of encounters

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between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities in ways that defy easy categorization.

Known for her high professional standards and her thoroughness, Remie left no stone unturned as she combed all available sources in pursuit of clearly-defined analytic objectives, as demonstrated in her groundbreaking early work on the economic history of Muslim Spain. Yet she also understood very well the importance of taking a wider view from time to time, and she was equally fascinated by other regions of the Mediterranean world—where she addressed a diversity of themes that could range from chess to art to food, clothes, bathing, and “religious noise” (such as public calls to prayer). Remie knew that developments in religious, social, cultural, legal, political, and economic history were always intertwined, and she was not afraid to delve into new territory whenever necessary, even crossing over the old disciplinary divide between medieval and early modern history. She taught her students to do the same, and that legacy deserves to be passed on now more than ever.

This book thus arose from a desire to reflect on and celebrate Olivia Remie Constable’s scholarly contributions. At the same time, the editors agreed that she would not have appreciated a memorial that did not itself make an important contribution to the ongoing pursuit of historical research. We asked authors to limit their explicit response to Remie’s own work and rather bring together and share the kinds of studies that she would most have enjoyed reading herself: innovative, thought-provoking, interdisciplinary investigations of cross-cultural exchange, ranging widely across time and geography. We were fortunate to receive such an enthusiastic response from scholars representing many different perspectives and methodologies, and working in a variety of sub-fields, all bound together by a common interest in interfaith relations.

The essays in this volume share a commitment to studying how different societies have historically perceived their religious “Others,” and how real-world interactions have shaped and have been shaped by such perceptions. The Mediterranean, broadly understood as a region, has long been an important site for these sorts of investigations. And while the Mediterranean provides an overarching background for this volume, some papers focus more narrowly on specific sites or polities (particularly in the Iberian Peninsula) while others expand to a near-global scale. By the same token, while the “medieval” period is our primary temporal frame, we had no qualms about disrupting that frame with the inclusion of essays that range as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In so doing, this volume serves to demonstrate the quality, scope, and breadth of work currently being done in our field. Questions about interfaith relations in history are not new, especially for medievalists working in Iberia and the Mediterranean region as a whole (as will be discussed further below), but they are today being addressed with an unprecedented degree of sophistication and nuance. We have learned to move beyond simplistic concepts of “convivencia,” “colonialism,” or “(in)tolerance” to realize that all of these and more could simultaneously exist to varying degrees.

Modern scholars realize that it is impossible to fully untangle the complexities of the past from just one point of view, or one set of primary sources. Hence the importance of drawing on as many perspectives, sources, and interpretive methods as possible to build up kaleidoscopic and dynamic, rather than unidimensional or static, glimpses of historical events. In this volume we thus see examples of scholars engaging with Church art, literature, historiography, scientific treatises, and polemics, to name just a few approaches, in order to study how the religious “Other” was depicted over a wide range of places and across time, and to serve different purposes and audiences. There are also microhistories that examine the experiences of individual families, classes, and communities (even ships’ crews) as they interacted with one another in their own specific contexts. Several of these microhistories, grouped together in part II of this book, tend to draw their source material from Church or state archives as well as jurisprudential texts, and so naturally they focus on the later medieval and early modern periods—when such sources became (relatively) plentiful.

Our intention has not been to “cover” the entirety of such a broad topic as the history of all interfaith relations across the medieval Mediterranean, but rather to bring together samples of exciting recent work that will be of interest to seasoned experts as well as to novices who wish to find their own ways forward. Inevitably, this has resulted in a certain amount of concentration in some areas and gaps in others. About half of the essays focus on Iberia, for example, as opposed to other regions of the Mediterranean. Byzantine territories in particular do not emerge as a focal point in any of our essays. And while Christians, Muslims, and Jews appear in many guises, more could certainly be said about sectarian divisions within these communities as well.

Nevertheless, each essay in this collection has implications that reach far beyond its particular topic. Each is a model of method, rigor, and analysis

that can be applied to other contexts; each will also undoubtedly inspire comparisons and analogies for scholars who may be working on similar topics but in quite different ways. And, taken as a whole, these essays provide a composite portrait of a fascinatingly complex world. That is how we hope this book will be received: as a collaborative contribution to our understanding of how interfaith relations, both real and imagined, productive and destructive, often tragic but at times bordering on the comic, have developed and unfolded across a key period in human history. That history, as we well know, has had significant lasting consequences and legacies (including periodic redeployments to serve a wide variety of modern political agendas). The findings presented here are therefore particularly important insofar as they shed helpful new light, from new angles, on some old and often vexed problems.

### MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

This project naturally intersects with, and is intended to contribute to, existing scholarly landscapes such as the constantly evolving field of “Mediterranean Studies.” Research focused on this region has long been central to conceptualizing the Middle Ages—even if that centrality has not always been acknowledged. But over the last several decades in particular, Mediterraneanists have struggled to critically re-define and re-frame their area of interest. One of the major points of contention centers on how themes of “unity” and “disunity” have impacted the history of this key region. Despite the fact that during the medieval period, the Mediterranean was not unified in politics, culture, language, or religion, both medieval people and modern scholars retained a memory of the unity of the Mediterranean under Roman rule. So the presence or absence of Mediterranean unity—the presence of it during the Roman period and its abrupt end in late antiquity—can in some ways be seen as a defining aspect of the period which we commonly call “medieval.”

It is also true that much of the foundation for defining Mediterranean Studies was laid long before the rise of scholarly societies, journals, and organizations dedicated solely to it as a coherent field. In fact, two of the scholars to whom we owe much of our conception of the Mediterranean region as a unit of study were working on questions of their own, unrelated to conceptualizing a new field. And yet, their wide-ranging notions of what the Mediterranean Sea was, and how it worked, have been

essential for virtually all later work in the area, whether or not that work explicitly engages with their ideas.

The earliest of these scholars, the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne, was engaged not with the question of whether or not the Mediterranean Sea was a unity in the Middle Ages—he took it as a given that it was not—but with that of precisely why it stopped being a unity after the end of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> For him, the question was a fundamental matter about what caused the Middle Ages to have the character that it did: a fractured Mediterranean economy, radical decline in cross-sea communication and shipping, the shifting northward of the center of political power into central Europe (which had once been at the periphery of the Roman world), and the general localization and demonetization that characterized the early medieval economy of Latin Christendom.

For Pirenne, the answer to what broke the Roman Mediterranean's unity lay in conflictive religious relationships—specifically, the rise of Islam and the religio-cultural and linguistic fracturing that was presumed to have followed upon the Muslim conquests of the southern and western shores of the Mediterranean. Not only was this a cultural matter, however, but also an economic and political one: Muslim traders who came to dominate the shipping lanes of the early medieval Mediterranean, in Pirenne's view, found nothing of value to trade with the Christians of the northern shores. Thus ended the economic unity of the Mediterranean that had been a hallmark of the Roman Empire, which had directed a state-based taxation and distribution economy that saw products from around the Mediterranean being shipped to and from Rome itself. And with the loss of cultural, religious, linguistic, and economic unity, so too went political unity. Pirenne asked how Europe and the Mediterranean were transformed from being a part of a centralized Roman Empire to a fractured and decentralized late antique world, and from there to the reformulated political centralization under Charlemagne—and the answer, he decided, was the divisive influence of Islam. Such simplistic conclusions are no longer widely accepted, but Pirenne's assumptions about the corrosive effects of religious difference remain influential.

A later historian, who was also writing about a much later period, is the French writer Fernand Braudel. His work on the early modern Mediterranean was specifically about the reign of Philip II (1556–1598),

<sup>1</sup> Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, trans. Bernard Miall (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939).

but his approach has since been abstracted and generalized by generations of Mediterranean scholars, who have found in his work justification for thinking about the Mediterranean as a unity in cultural, geographic, and environmental terms.<sup>2</sup> By switching his analysis from large-scale questions like those which occupied Pirenne, to small-scale acts of exchange and shared culture, Braudel found a Mediterranean that was united in many ways that surpassed the political. The environmental and geographical aspects of the Sea were, to Braudel, far more important in defining it than were political ruptures: looking at the *longue durée* suggested far more continuity than discontinuity. Braudel also began the process of theorizing how we can study a “sea” as a unit. His answer was to include not only the waters and shores, but the hinterlands as well. The common connectors between the sea, the mountains, and the interior lands around its shores were the slowly-changing elements of culture and environment. For example, common foods found in the cultures around the seashores reflected, for Braudel, a similarity of agricultural conditions and a shared set of communications that made cultural transmission easy.

The very different Mediterraneans of Pirenne and Braudel have provided scholars with much to discuss and debate, with many of them directly refuting these earlier works and others simply adding nuance. Some of the scholars who took aim at Pirenne have sought to overturn his notion of Islam as directly confrontational to Christianity, and to find far more cultural unity in the Mediterranean than his theory allows for. And many who objected to Braudel’s thesis have looked away from environment and geography to envision a Mediterranean that was less coherent than his. There are too many articles and books written in answer to Pirenne and Braudel to enumerate them all, but two books in particular merit consideration because they have been instructive to new generations of Mediterranean scholars seeking to think about the Sea as a space for study. Such studies are the basis for several of the essays in this volume, such as the opening essay by Tom Burman.

The first of these is by Michael McCormick, who by focusing on economic connections across the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean proposed a region that was far more interconnected and unified in those

<sup>2</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

centuries (despite its diversity) than Pirenne's vision allowed.<sup>3</sup> By amassing a wealth of data points for economic travel—including brief mentions in sources indicating, or even just implying, that someone or something moved across the Mediterranean on a ship—he showed that economic communications across the Mediterranean continued long after the supposed break between the northern and southern shores of the Sea. In fact, he found considerable evidence for ships coming and going between many ports, crisscrossing the sea-lanes north-south and east-west throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

The difference between the imperial Mediterranean and the post-Roman one was not that trade, travel, and communications which once had thrived suddenly halted. Rather, McCormick found that the difference was two-fold: firstly, without Rome as a clearing-house and director of all trans-Mediterranean shipping as it once had been, cargo shipments were decentralized and sea-lanes crisscrossed the waters rather than radiating out from Rome. Secondly, he argued, the difference lay primarily in the nature of the sources rather than in the perceived configuration of reality. In other words, surviving texts from the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean were less concerned with economic affairs than they were about other things—particularly related to religion. But while economic activity was not the explicit subject of most texts from the time period, it could be inferred by understanding the implications of other acts of maritime travel. Every account of a pilgrim heading over the Sea to Jerusalem, for example, implied a ship on which that pilgrim sailed. And every such ship must have been filled with something more economically valuable than pilgrims: cargo of some type, unmentioned in the texts, also must have been moving from port to port.

In keeping with Michael McCormick's analysis of the early medieval Mediterranean as a region that was more interconnected than Pirenne had allowed, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell sought to respond to Braudel's vision of a Mediterranean Sea connected by consistency of geography and climate.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Horden and Purcell did a close analysis of the climates of several locales (which they call micro-regions) and found that diversity—topographical, environmental, climatological,

<sup>3</sup> Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

agricultural—was the more prevalent factor around the Mediterranean’s shores than was sameness. But this diversity is precisely what fueled a certain unity: need for products that were not grown locally compelled Mediterranean peoples to seek connection across the seas. Because some places had things that were desired in other places, and travel across water was in many ways easier than across land, the Mediterranean Sea became a site for connectivity through communications. Thus in light of this conception, political, religious, environmental, or linguistic disunity should in no way inhibit our thinking about the Mediterranean as a legitimate and needful unit of study—and of its peoples as potentially experiencing both unity and disunity simultaneously, in various ways, and in a wide variety of relationships with “Others,” depending on their context and circumstances.

All who follow these founding scholars with their own research in and around the premodern Mediterranean thus work with an important legacy of questions about unity/disunity, and about how to study a place that contained such multitudes of religions, economies, laws, languages, and cultures. And the work continues. David Abulafia’s recent *The Great Sea*, for one, reminds us again of the role of human actors within the long span of Mediterranean history, investigating the degree to which individuals and groups shaped patterns of political and economic unity throughout the millennia and right up to the present.<sup>5</sup> Many other studies are ongoing, and there is no telling what new findings await on the horizon; but there is no question that they will make further contributions to the study of problems, old and new, with ongoing relevance.

Those who work within Mediterranean Studies today assert in particular that this is an area with at least equal importance to historical units based upon national boundaries (which seek, at their root, ancestral descent from national origins). As such, the field of Mediterranean Studies challenges the national(ist) paradigms that underlay many traditional medieval and early modern studies. It also challenges models of premodern European history that prioritize Latinate, Christian societies especially around a perceived cultural “core” in northern Europe. Mediterranean Studies complicates these notions by highlighting connections, comparisons, and conflicts between and across numerous religious, linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries within the Sea and beyond. Much of the

<sup>5</sup> David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).



recent surge in publications dedicated to Mediterranean Studies may be due to the growing appeal of cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, inter-religious studies that are dedicated to understanding connections between communities that might otherwise be understood as merely separate or conflictive. And those are precisely the sorts of studies that are to be found in this collection.

## INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS IN MEDIEVAL IBERIA

If there is one region of the Mediterranean that has garnered the lion's share of such research to date, it is surely the Iberian Peninsula. This is in part because it was for so long a home to members of all three Abrahamic faiths (before Jews and Muslims were tragically expelled). It is also a particularly well-documented part of the premodern world, with rich archives surviving for some communities that date back to the twelfth century and even before—as well as the many other cultural artifacts left by members of all three major faith communities. Iberian polities therefore present scholars with a valuable set of historical laboratories, as it were, sites where questions and theories about different aspects of inter-group relations can be assayed with greater refinement and detail than is often the case elsewhere. Hence the preponderance of Iberian-focused essays in this collection—essays which speak primarily to the specifics of their particular times and places, but may potentially shed light on similar situations across the Mediterranean basin.

Two paradigms have loomed large in the study of medieval Iberia since at least the mid-twentieth century. The *convivencia* and the *reconquista* paradigms have posited, respectively, either a largely harmonious interaction between Iberian Christians, Muslims, and Jews, or a “clash of civilizations,” manifest in the protracted military conflict between Christians and Muslims (and sometimes Jews) over land each understood as theirs by right. Despite the persistent ideological appeal of both approaches (holding the promise of ecumenical dialogue for some, and historical justification of Catholic-Christian-Spanish national identity for others), most scholars of medieval Iberia today agree that these are deeply flawed paradigms which ought to be rejected. Consensus on rejection, however, does not mean the field has turned the page. Old paradigms linger, if for no other reason than to counter political instrumentalization of the period,

and to engage those medievalists outside the field whose points of reference for medieval Iberia continue to be *convivencia* and/or *reconquista*.

One enticing new substitute paradigm bears another catchy Spanish word that is meant to complicate visions of rosy *convivencia*: *conveniencia* (which translates to “convenience”). Put side-by-side, the terms evince their connection: where *convivencia* highlights harmonious togetherness, *conveniencia*, as articulated by Brian Catlos, cautions us to see pragmatism—that is, socioeconomic vested interests lying at the heart of interfaith cooperation.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Muslims, Christians, and Jews generally worked together only when it served their purposes, not out of a sense of having superseded religious-cultural differences. While the insight is helpful, the addition of another layer of terminological abstraction does not eliminate our need to keep digging, to keep refining and testing our historical evidence in hopes of more fully understanding past realities in all their complexity.

Examining interconnectedness itself, and the precise contexts in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews actually came into contact with one another, has moved scholarship forward and away from all-encompassing narratives that lent themselves to predetermined relational outcomes. Some forty years ago, to take one example, the dominant narrative around *mudéjar* experiences was one of oppression: “Mudejars suffered history,” as Father Burns aptly put it.<sup>7</sup> Hence this narrative privileged the many clear instances of discrimination and persecution of Muslims by Christians, rather than broadening the study of Christian-Muslim relations in ways that need not always interpret those relations as evidence supporting a narrative of oppression. In more recent years, the focus seems to have shifted toward microstudies (several examples of which can be found in this volume)—recognizing that interfaith relations were nuanced and contingent, and clearly deserving of more contextualized study. Again, no one mold will quite fit.

There is clearly still much work that needs to be done, and this collection aims to showcase some of the most promising avenues that are currently being explored. Contemporary study of medieval Iberian interfaith

<sup>6</sup> Brian A. Catlos, “Contexto y conveniencia en la Corona de Aragón. Propuesta para un modelo de interacción entre grupos etno-religiosos minoritarios y mayoritarios,” *Revista d’Història Medieval* 12 (2002): 259–68.

<sup>7</sup> Robert I. Burns, “Muslims in the Thirteenth-Century Realms of Aragon: Interaction and Reaction,” in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100–1300*, ed. James M. Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 102.

relations and perceptions is pushing traditional boundaries, whether geographic, temporal, ethnic and cultural, and/or linguistic. One should not think of medieval Iberia as the prefiguration of the modern countries of Spain and Portugal (and Andorra) and their respective frontiers, but rather as an interconnected world stretching beyond the Iberian Peninsula into North Africa, southern France, and elsewhere. Chronologically, conventional cut-off dates for the end of the medieval period simply will not do, for exploration of Old and New Christian relations commands our attention beyond 1500, and even beyond 1609–1610 for that matter. There was a time when studies of medieval Castile were synonymous with medieval Christian Iberia. While this is no longer the case (thanks in part to decades of fine scholarship centered, for example, on individual *comunidades autónomas* in Spain), works that focus on Castile (and Castilian literature) still dominate the field. Some of our essays fall within this category, while others do not; all work together to enrich our field of vision.

An interdisciplinary field such as this one calls for increased dialogue and comparative work across disciplines. By and large the potential for comparative work has not been fully realized. Differ as they may, the multicultural contexts of the Maghrib, Sicily, the Balkans, and the Levant also offer opportunities to broaden the questions that frame our inquiries. Even within the Iberian Peninsula, studies that cross the real and imagined boundaries that separated Christian polities from Muslim polities (and both from Jewish lived realities) are few and far between. It is unlikely, and perhaps even undesirable, that any single scholar might become conversant in all of the necessary languages, cultures, and histories of medieval Iberia, let alone the Mediterranean as a whole; nor can any scholar hope to master all the myriad documentary types and archival depositories of this vast region. All the more reason for historians, literary scholars, art historians, archeologists, musicologists, paleogeneticists, and experts in any number of other fields, to work together.

### A NOTE ON LANGUAGES

Owing to the broad range of articles in this volume, there is a certain degree of variation in language usage from one essay to the next. For the most part, the editors have chosen to maintain the linguistic and stylistic preferences of each individual author, so that in some cases personal and place names are rendered in modern English; whereas in others, Castilian, Latin, Catalan, Portuguese, Arabic, Greek, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, and

other forms are more likely to appear. Where confusion seems possible, we have added modern place names in brackets to clarify the identity of a medieval (or early modern) site. Otherwise, a certain degree of inconsistency and variety seemed appropriate as a reflection of the diversity of our historical materials.

All Arabic, Persian, and Turkish passages have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system. Translations are by the essay authors unless otherwise indicated.

**Acknowledgments** All scholarly projects of this size accrue a long list of debts to friends, family, and colleagues that can never be fully repaid. That is especially true for a book dedicated to the commemoration of a beloved colleague, friend, and advisor who left us far too soon. Remie Constable's impact on the lives of the contributors and editors of this book is immeasurable, and she deserves our first thanks. Gratitude is also due to all of the people working in the broad fields of Mediterranean and Iberian Studies who have interacted with and advanced Remie's work; it is our hope that her intellectual legacy will continue to live on for a long time in our shared commitment to rigorous, innovative scholarship.

Gratitude is also due to Amy Remensnyder, the outside reader for the press, whose constructive insights and enthusiastic encouragement helped steer the volume to good port. The editors also thank Meagan Simpson and the whole team at Palgrave. Too many colleagues and friends have contributed inspiration, advice, and support to the editors and to each of the essay contributors over the last few years for all to be mentioned individually, but we are truly grateful and look forward to celebrating with many of you soon. The idea for this volume arose from two conference sessions at the Medieval Academy meeting in 2015, honoring Remie's legacy in the aftermath of her passing. In addition to papers by several of this volume's contributors, there were presentations by Paul Freedman, Karla Mallette, Ben Ehlers, and Hussein Fancy at these two sessions, with Teo Ruiz and Dan Smail as respondents; all of whom we thank for their work honoring Remie. Finally, thanks and recognition are due to Matthew Bell, John Van Engen, Margaret Meserve, and to the entire community of medievalists at the University of Notre Dame.